

The President

May 17, 1976

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Mr. George Bush  
Director  
Central Intelligence Agency  
Washington, D. C. 20505

[TAKE NO ACTION,  
UNLESS SPECIFICALLY  
ASKED TO DO  
SO.]

Dear Mr. Bush:

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Activities, under the Chairmanship of Senator Frank Church, in its report on covert and clandestine relations between the C.I.A. and universities, recommended no action to prohibit such relations. Instead, the Senate Select Committee said it believes "it is the responsibility of private institutions and particularly the American academic community to set the professional and ethical standards of its members."

I accept the responsibility named by the Senate Select Committee, and write you for information which I need in order to discharge it. Under the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552), I wish to know, as President of Amherst College, whether any intelligence operation conducted by the C.I.A. has involved any faculty member, student, or employee of Amherst College, including, but not limited to, paid or unpaid agents or informers.

I do not wish to have the name of specific individuals. I wish only to know whether and to what extent any individual at Amherst College may have been involved in covert relations with the C.I.A. Frankly, I am incredulous that any individual could possibly have been, but then the report of the Senate Select Committee is surely a challenge to innocent faith in the operations of agencies of the United States government.

I do not wish to lecture faculty, students, or employees of the College, in the abstract, about their professional and ethical obligations. To do so could only arouse general suspicion and free-floating anxiety, wonderment about why I address the question at all. I find myself in the awkward position of not knowing, by definition, whether there is some secret arrangement between the C.I.A. and any member of the College, now or in the past.

Important issues are involved. At Amherst College, we try to teach students to live by a code of "intellectual responsibility." A sentence from that code reads, "Amherst cannot educate those who are unwilling to submit their own work and ideas to critical assessment." The sentence is an attempt to capture in words the ideal of an intellectual community, the belief that openness, honesty, the willingness to say what one has to say and to accept criticism and to listen to opposing views are essential, the necessary conditions of intellectual life. Secrecy subverts those essential values and conditions. It is, to put it simply, intolerable in an academic community.

Mr. George Bush

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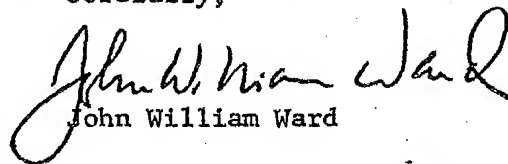
More is involved, no less than the conditions of freedom in a pluralistic and free society. That is not simply rhetoric. Your responsibilities as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency are heavy and grave. The justification of all you do derives finally from the defense of freedom. But in a free society, the surest way to subvert freedom is to call into doubt, to question the authenticity and credibility of free and independent institutions within American society itself.

Between the isolated individual and the awesome power of the state, a free society depends upon intermediate institutions to act as buffers against power, to say "No" to power. To erode the capacity to believe that private institutions do play the role which freedom requires is to create a psychology of mistrust and fear which can only weaken freedom itself.

Your responsibility is great. My responsibility is small. But to discharge my responsibility, namely, to remind members of one academic community of their proper intellectual and moral and political responsibility, requires information from you. It is information legally required, but I would not insist on that. It is morally required.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Cordially,



John William Ward

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cc: William W. Van Alstyne, President, AAUP  
George L. Shinn, Chairman, Board of Trustees  
Senator Frank Church  
Senator Edward Kennedy  
Senator Edward Brooke

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